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Making People Glad to Do What You Want

BACK IN 1915, AMERICA WAS AGHAST. FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, THE nations of Europe had been slaughtering one another on a scale never before dreamed of in all the bloody annals of mankind. Could peace be brought about? No one knew. But Woodrow Wilson was determined to try. He would send a personal representative, a peace emissary, to counsel with the warlords of Europe.

William Jennings Bryan, Secretary of State, Bryan, the peace advocate, longed to go. He saw a chance to perform a great service and make his name immortal. But Wilson appointed another man, his intimate friend and advisor Colonel Edward M. House; and it was House's thorny task to break the unwelcome news to Bryan without giving him offense.

"Bryan was distinctly disappointed when he heard I was to go to Europe as the peace emissary," Colonel House records in his diary. "He said he had planned to do this himself . . .

"I replied that the President thought it would be unwise for anyone to do this officially, and *that his going would attract a great deal of attention* and people would wonder why he was there. . . ."

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You see the intimation? House practically told Bryan that he was *too important* for the job—and Bryan was satisfied.

Colonel House, adroit, experienced in the ways of the world, was following one of the important rules of human relations: *Always make the other person happy about doing the thing you suggest.*

Woodrow Wilson followed that policy even when inviting William Gibbs McAdoo to become a member of his cabinet. That was the highest honor he could confer upon anyone, and yet Wilson extended the invitation in such a way as to make McAdoo feel doubly important. Here is the story in McAdoo's own words: "He [Wilson] said that he was making up his cabinet and that he would be very glad if I would accept a place in it as Secretary of the Treasury. He had a delightful way of putting things; he created the impression that by accepting this great honor I would be doing him a favor."

Unfortunately, Wilson didn't always employ such tact. If he had, history might have been different. For example, Wilson didn't make the Senate and the Republican Party happy by entering the United States in the League of Nations. Wilson refused to take such prominent Republican leaders as Elihu Root or Charles Evans Hughes or Henry Cabot Lodge to the peace conference with him. Instead, he took along unknown men from his own party. He snubbed the Republicans, refused to let them feel that the League was their idea as well as his, refused to let them have a finger in the pie; and, as a result of this crude handling of human relations, wrecked his own career, ruined his health, shortened his life, caused America to stay out of the League, and altered the history of the world.

Statesmen and diplomats aren't the only ones who use this make-a-person-happy-to-do-things-you-want-them-to-do approach. Dale O. Ferrier of Fort Wayne, Indiana, told how he encouraged one of his young children to willingly do the chore he was assigned.

"One of Jeff's chores was to pick up pears from under the pear tree so the person who was mowing underneath wouldn't have to

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stop to pick them up. He didn't like this chore, and frequently it was either not done at all or it was done so poorly that the mower had to stop and pick up several pears that he had missed. Rather than have an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation about it, one day I said to him: 'Jeff, I'll make a deal with you. For every bushel basket full of pears you pick up, I'll pay you one dollar. But after you are finished, for every pear I find left in the yard, I'll take away a dollar. How does that sound?' As you would expect, he not only picked up all of the pears, but I had to keep an eye on him to see that he didn't pull a few off the trees to fill up some of the baskets."

I knew a man who had to refuse many invitations to speak, invitations extended by friends, invitations coming from people to whom he was obligated; and yet he did it so adroitly that the other person was at least contented with his refusal. How did he do it? Not by merely talking about the fact that he was too busy and too-this and too-that. No, after expressing his appreciation of the invitation and regretting his inability to accept it, he suggested a substitute speaker. In other words, he didn't give the other person any time to feel unhappy about the refusal. He immediately changed the other person's thoughts to some other speaker who could accept the invitation.

Gunter Schmidt, who took our course in West Germany, told of an employee in the food store he managed who was negligent about putting the proper price tags on the shelves where the items were displayed. This caused confusion and customer complaints. Reminders, admonitions, confrontations with her about this did not do much good. Finally, Mr. Schmidt called her into his office and told her he was appointing her Supervisor of Price Tag Posting for the entire store and she would be responsible for keeping all of the shelves properly tagged. This new responsibility and title changed her attitude completely, and she fulfilled her duties satisfactorily from then on.

Childish? Perhaps. But that is what they said to Napoleon when he created the Legion of Honor and distributed 15,000 crosses to his soldiers and made eighteen of his generals "Marshals of

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France" and called his troops the "Grand Army." Napoleon was criticized for giving "toys" to war-hardened veterans, and Napoleon replied, "Men are ruled by toys."

This technique of giving titles and authority worked for Napoleon and it will work for you. For example, a friend of mine, Mrs. Ernest Gent of Scarsdale, New York, was troubled by boys running across and destroying her lawn. She tried criticism. She tried coaxing. Neither worked. Then she tried giving the worst sinner in the gang a title and a feeling of authority. She made him her "detective" and put him in charge of keeping all trespassers off her lawn. That solved her problem. Her "detective" built a bonfire in the backyard, heated an iron red hot, and threatened to brand any boy who stepped on the lawn.

The effective leader should keep the following guidelines in mind when it is necessary to change attitudes or behavior:

1. Be sincere. Do not promise anything that you cannot deliver. Forget about the benefits to yourself and concentrate on the benefits to the other person.

2. Know exactly what it is you want the other person to do.

3. Be empathetic. Ask yourself what it is the other person really wants.

4. Consider the benefits that person will receive from doing what you suggest.

5. Match those benefits to the other person's wants.

6. When you make your request, put it in a form that will convey to the other person the idea that he personally will benefit. We could give a curt order like this: "John, we have customers coming in tomorrow and I need the stockroom cleaned out. So sweep it out, put the stock in neat piles on the shelves and polish the counter." Or we could express the same idea by showing John the benefits he will get from doing the task: "John, we have a job that should be completed right away. *If it is done now, we won't be faced with it later.* I am bringing some customers in tomorrow to show our facilities. I would like to show them the stockroom, but

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it is in poor shape. If you could sweep it out, put the stock in neat piles on the shelves, and polish the counter, it would make us look efficient and *you will have done your part to provide a good company image.*"

Will John be happy about doing what you suggest? Probably not very happy, but happier than if you had not pointed out the benefits. Assuming you know that John has pride in the way his stockroom looks and is interested in contributing to the company image, he will be more likely to be cooperative. It also will have been pointed out to John that the job would have to be done eventually and by doing it now, he won't be faced with it later.

It is naïve to believe you will always get a favorable reaction from other persons when you use these approaches, but the experience of most people shows that you are more likely to change attitudes this way than by not using these principles—and if you increase your successes by even a mere 10 percent, you have become 10 percent more effective as a leader than you were before—and that is *your* benefit.

People are more likely to do what you would like them to do when you use . . .

PRINCIPLE 9

Make the other person happy about doing the thing you suggest.
